

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 16, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC, 20500

Dear President Biden,

We are writing to urgently request additional information regarding allegations of threats and intimidation by Iran against U.S. citizens and corporations that have prevented the transfer of oil from the *Suez Rajan*, an oil tanker anchored outside of Galveston, Texas. The ability for a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) to prevent the transfer of seized assets within U.S. territorial waters is an unprecedented intimidation effort that threatens to undermine our Nation's security.

No American citizen or company should ever fear retaliation from an FTO for assisting in law enforcement activities or engaging in lawful commerce.

We support the Administration's stated commitment to enforce petroleum sanctions against the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) - Quds Force, a designated FTO, and the recent seizure of the oil on board the *Suez Rajan*. However, current public reporting that such an operation cannot be completed due to Iranian threats against U.S. companies and persons undermines the success of this seizure and imperils the U.S. government's ability to successfully complete future seizures.

The current interagency counter-IRGC petroleum seizure program is most effective when properly resourced and enforced. Since 2019, the program has seized over \$200 million in Iranian oil. This program, which has also generated over \$41 million for the U.S. government's Treasury Forfeiture Fund, is depriving the IRGC of significant resources, which it uses to engage in terrorism targeting American citizens and our allies and partners around the world.

Seizing Iranian oil generates revenue for the U.S. Treasury and creates a means of restitution for victims of state-sponsored terrorism. This interagency program uses counter-terrorism authorities under 8 U.S.C. 981(a)(1)(G), which requires 75 percent of the seized profits to be transferred to the U.S. Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism Fund (USVSST Fund), which compensates survivors and claimants of the 9/11 terror attacks, the 1979 Iranian hostage crisis, and other terror attacks. The counter-IRGC program has provided, or is set to provide, over \$123 million to the USVSST Fund since 2020.

The 800,000 barrels of oil on the *Suez Rajan* are valued at \$56 million and a seizure would contribute additional resources to the USVSST Fund. Once seized, these assets would further close the gap between committed and available resources for the USVSST fund. Recently, the Special Master of the Fund has determined that there are insufficient assets to authorize an

additional round of payments in 2024 to the 15,769 Americans registered with the fund. Furthermore, the Congressional Research Service reports that there is a current estimated outstanding balance of more than \$105 billion. We owe it to these American families to enforce our sanctions and more aggressively close this gap.

Permitting the months-long delay in the seizure and transfer of the oil aboard the *Suez Rajan*, will further delay the federal government's ability to help make American victims of terrorism whole via USVSST funds. This is unacceptable.

We request that you work expeditiously to resolve the delay in the transfer of seized oil from the *Suez Rajan* and continue to enforce the law against Foreign Terrorist Organizations, such as the IRGC. The enforcement of petroleum sanctions will become irrelevant if American citizens and companies involved live in fear of Iranian retaliation. It is imperative that the Administration make clear that Iran and designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations cannot prevent our government from carrying out legitimate law enforcement operations. In addition, we request, no later than September 15, 2023, the following:

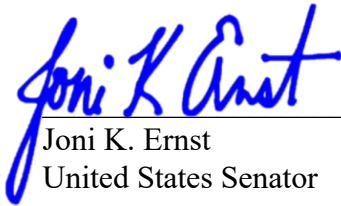
1. A briefing on the progress of transferring the seized oil from the *Suez Rajan* to U.S. custody and on the progress of current and future operations related to the enforcement of petrochemical sanctions against the IRGC.
2. A written response including the following information:
 - A. The date when the Suez Rajan arrived in the territorial waters of the United States;
 - B. The date when the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) approved the unloading of the Suez Rajan;
 - C. The average time previous sanctions enforcement operations involving shipments of Iranian petroleum have taken to receive USGC approval for transfer and the subsequent timelines of successful transfers; and
 - D. Any available government-owned assets able to assist in or conduct the transfer of seized oil in this enforcement activity. If none are available, an assessment of costs for the U.S. government to lease such assets.
3. A non-public list of companies the Department of Justice or another government entity has requested to assist in this operation, including delineation of any company refusing, or which has previously refused to support this U.S. government operation.
4. The approximate value of U.S. government assistance, including grants, technical support, contracts awarded, or other support, each declining company has received in the previous three fiscal years
5. A national security assessment of the threats made by Iran, entities affiliated with it, or its proxies against U.S. citizens or companies involved or considering involvement in this transfer, to include:
 - A. The nature and credibility of the threats made;

- B. The security and mitigation measures the U.S. government has implemented in response to these threats; and
 - C. The impact on the national security of the United States and the effectiveness of future enforcement operations against Iran resulting from these threats. and;
6. An outline of actions the Administration has taken to date, and will be taking in the future to mitigate future delays related to U.S. sanctions enforcement activity and to address threats FTOs make against U.S. citizens and companies.

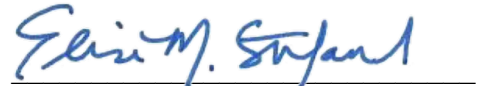
Thank you for your attention to this important issue. The American people deserve to know that their government will protect their lives and livelihoods and will deter any attempts by foreign adversaries and terrorists to intimidate their support for U.S. law enforcement activities.

We look forward to your response, the briefing, and your swift action on this matter.


Sincerely,




Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator




Elise Stefanik
Member of Congress



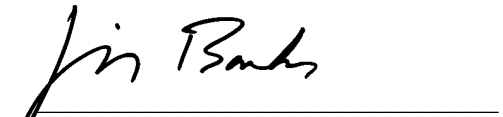
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator




Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress




Lindsey Graham
United States Senator



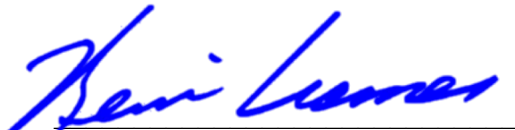
Jim Banks
Member of Congress




Bill Hagerty
United States Senator



Don Davis
Member of Congress



Kevin Cramer
United States Senator



Max Miller
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Antony Blinken, Secretary of State
 The Honorable Janet Yellen, Secretary of Treasury
 The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary of Homeland Security
 The Honorable Merrick Garland, Attorney General